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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the Open University's Postgraduate Certificate in Education, a postgraduate preservice teacher training program in the United Kingdom. The program provides access to the teaching profession for those who cannot train by conventional routes. It is characterized by: distance education; school-based partnerships; an explicit framework of outcome assessment standards; a portfolio model of formative and summative assessment; a network of support via local tutors, regional seminars, and workshops; a regional and national e-mail and e-conference system; national availability; and part-time, asynchronous, home-based study. This supported open learning and school-university partnership model has proved successful in recruiting trainee teachers in the context of a United Kingdom teacher recruitment crisis, widening access to the profession for underrepresented groups and promoting the professional dimension in teacher assessment. This teacher education model, and its systems, structures, and underlying principles, has been the basis of a number of successful international collaborations, including with the United States, where there are common issues of teacher quality, teacher recruitment, and school improvement. (SM)

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Open University's Postgraduate Certificate in Education (UK):
a contribution to teacher quality, diversity, access and retention through distance education and school-university national partnerships

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The Open University's Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) is the largest provider of postgraduate initial teacher training (pre-service teacher credentialing program) using a distinctive form of distance education - Supported Open Learning - in the UK and Europe. The PGCE programme began in 1994 to provide access for those who, for personal, professional, financial or geographical reasons, had been unable to undertake pre-service teacher training by conventional routes.

The OU PGCE is an 18 month part-time programme operating nationally in England, Wales and Northern Ireland with two primary lines (age range 5-11 year), specialising in early and later years, and seven secondary lines (age range 11-18 years) in English, Mathematics, Science, Design and Technology, Modern Foreign Languages (French), History, and Music. The intake of trainee teachers each year is approximately 1000. The programme leads to an academic university award, the Postgraduate Certificate of Education, and a professional qualification, Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), conferred by the UK government.

The OU PGCE is characterised by:

- supported Open Learning (distance education) through extensive purpose - designed, multi-media teaching materials
- school-based partnership - local to the trainee teacher- which operates as a site for teacher training, support and assessment
- an explicit framework of outcome assessment standards incorporating subject and professional knowledge, teaching competences and professional qualities
- a portfolio model of formative and summative assessment that integrates theory and classroom practice
- a network of support via local tutors, regional seminars and workshops
- a regional and national e-mail and e-conference system for information, teaching and support
- national availability
- part-time, asynchronous, home-based study

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These features contribute to a programme with distinctive differences in structure and operation when compared to conventional initial teacher training (ITT) routes and have enabled the OU PGCE to make a major contribution to teacher education in the UK context. Its successful record in attracting mature, second career, ethnic minority and disabled groups to the teaching profession has enhanced teacher diversity and made a significant contribution to teacher recruitment and retention in a decade of teacher recruitment crisis in the UK. It has worked in partnership with a significant proportion of schools, nationally, and supported school staff through professional development programmes to undertake a teacher educator role, such as mentoring. The professional development is transferable to other school-based staff development and, thereby, the programme has made a contribution to school improvement. Ratings by schools and alumni of the effectiveness of the programme and the performance of its Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) have been very positive, particularly in the areas of professional commitment and teaching competences in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Programme materials have been used extensively by other university teacher education programmes in the UK.

In the period 1994-9 the programme:

- trained 6% of all ITT trainees in England and Wales and worked in partnership with over 4000 schools and 8000 school staff
- produced over 3800 trained teachers with Qualified Teacher Status. Of these, 38 per cent are in secondary shortage subjects - mathematics, science, French, and design and technology. 50 per cent of primary trained teachers have a degree profile specialising in science, mathematics or design and technology.
- annually recruited, on average, 6 per cent from ethnic minority groups matching UK national ethnicity figures
- annually recruited predominately from the 30-45 age group, 'second careers'. Surveys show that the majority of all OU PGCE trainees could not access any other initial teacher training programme
- produces teachers with good employment and retention rates. Surveys on OU Newly Qualified Teacher employment destinations compare favourably with figures for the national cohort, taking account of age. A study of primary OU PGCE teachers shows very high employment retention rates of 98%.

Programme Design and Principles

The programme design enables the trainee teacher to carry out part-time supported self-study at home and blocks of full-time school experience in local partner schools. The programme is divided into 3 stages across 18 months. Each stage is associated with a full-time placement in the partner school (Note: 18 weeks school experience in two schools is a UK government regulation) The school-based training programme takes the trainee teacher through a careful process of induction, collaborative teaching through to solo teaching.

- **Programme Content and Materials**

All PGCE secondary and primary programmes share a broadly common framework to ensure integration of study material, school experience and assessment. Trainee teachers enter the programme and work through a coherent sequence of learning experiences as part of a secondary subject or primary phase cohort and tutor group.

The OU PGCE provides a computer with printer and modem for all trainee teachers, for the duration of the programme. This gives access to an extensive system of regional and national e-conferences, specifically linked to this programme, and ensures the development of personal and professional Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) capabilities. The use of e-conferencing is a compulsory feature of the PGCE programme.

The extensive range of multi-media material provides major teaching and training elements. The programme materials have been designed to:

- ensure consistency and quality of training across all programme lines
- provide training and education that explicitly supports the development of the assessment outcome standards and provides a strong basis for further professional development
- provide access to extensive library resources
- provide access, through extensive audio and video exemplary materials, to a range of school contexts and effective teaching models
- integrate school-based and home-study elements; theoretical and practical aspects of the programme;
- ensure continuity and progression at each stage of the programme
- integrate teaching and assessment elements
- allow the trainee teacher to develop responsibility for their own professional learning in terms of planning, managing, subject knowledge auditing and self-assessment.

- **The School-University Partnership Model**

The OU PGCE Programme forms a partnership with a local school to provide training, assessment and support for the trainee teacher. It is a genuine partnership in that the school has a role and responsibilities in all aspects of the programme, i.e. selection, training, support, assessment, preparation for career-entry, and quality assurance.

Schools are reviewed against set criteria for entering partnership. Key staff in the school include a class teacher as mentor and a school co-ordinator, who is a senior

member of staff with a staff development role, and carries out a school-based moniotring and co-assessor role.

The school receives a fee and, at the end of programme, the computer system on loan to the trainee teacher is given to the school. The OU provides professional development training to mentors through a Supported Open Learning programme including face-to-face briefings.

- **Teaching and Assessment Model**

Teaching Model

The teaching model is a framework of interconnecting support comprising programme multi-media materials, ICT network, the partner school teaching staff, OU regional academic staff and trainee teacher self-help groups. Roles and responsibilities are explicit and follow a structured framework to ensure a coherent learning experience for the trainee teacher.

The OU Supported Open Learning model provides face-to-face tutor support in regionally based groups of up to 15 trainee teachers. There are subject- specific seminars/workshops and tutorials to provide a social learning context for trainee teachers. The extensive network of computer conferencing at tutorial, regional and national level completes the model.

The Assessment Strategy

The OU PGCE assessment strategy is based on end-of-programme demonstration of assessment outcome standards organised under subject knowledge, teaching competences and professional qualities headings. The assessment model incorporates the UK government regulations for initial teacher training and Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

Trainee teachers submit an end-of-programme professional development portfolio with a prescribed structure and content to provide evidence to demonstrate the assessment outcome standards to the Assessment Board. The portfolio is developmentally constructed by the trainee teacher when they carry out prescribed assessment activities at each stage of the programme.

The assessment strategy is characterised by:

- explicit assessment outcome standards incorporating professional qualities and teaching competences, used by all involved in assessment

- formative assessment at each stage and summative assessment linked to assessment outcome standards and explicit assessment criteria

- prescribed assessment activities, at each stage, that integrate theory and classroom practice and ensure appropriate evidence is produced against assessment outcome standards

- explicit assessment roles for school staff, university staff and trainee teachers (self-assessment) that allow triangulation of evidence against the assessment outcome standards

- regular feedback for trainee teachers on progress towards assessment outcome standards at each stage and additional support for trainees who fail to make progress at each stage of the programme

- a profiling system to summatively record trainee strengths and weaknesses against the assessment outcome standards to inform ongoing professional development at career-entry level

- external review of assessment procedures by independent examiners appointed by the university

- **Quality Assurance**

The OU has well-established, rigorous, monitoring systems to ensure the quality of teaching and assessment on Supported Open Learning programmes and inform future development.

QA systems are in place for all aspects of the programme: admissions; partnership; programme structure; teaching; assessment; and employment destinations. Critically, systems are in place to monitor quality in both the university and school-based elements of the programme.

There are a number of principles that underpin the range of QA systems in place for the OU PGCE:

- the importance of quality input e.g. effective professional development for mentors and tutors; detailed guidance for partnership schools; and Supported Open Learning materials for trainee teachers

- a prescribed common framework that informs all teaching aspects of the programme and supports development of the assessment outcome standards, e.g. a school experience guide at each stage ensures entitlement to a range of subject specific and wider professional training opportunities

- all elements are interconnected e.g. the study guide, school experience guide and assessment guide are all integrated to support the development of the assessment outcome standards

- comprehensive monitoring by the Programme team – both to check on quality of provision and inform future development. For example, monitoring of school-based interviewing of applicants as part of admissions process;

reviewing schools for entering partnership; monitoring of school placements; monitoring of marked assignments; and monitoring of portfolios

- monitoring of individual trainee teacher progress through school visits by OU university staff

- procedures for responding to 'unsatisfactory' elements. All aspects of the teaching and assessment are interconnected to provide 'early warning' of difficulties that triggers University action

- all data is entered on PGCE programme database to support individual tracking of trainee teachers by regional and central OU staff; and inter-regional, inter-subject, comparisons by OU Programme team.

- **International Collaboration**

The success of the programme is evident from the extent of international interest in this model of teacher education, resulting in collaborative projects in Europe, North and South Africa and the US. The OU PGCE model has now been successfully adapted to provide professional development for pre-service and in-service teachers in a number of different cultural contexts where there is a need for a distance-learning and school-based solution to the common teacher education issues of teacher shortage and teacher quality.

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Biographical Sketch

Ann Shelton Mayes is Senior Lecturer in the Centre for Research and Development in Teacher Education, and Director of the Open University's PGCE Programme, the UK's largest provider of postgraduate teacher credentialing programmes using Supported Open Learning and school partnership. She has developed teacher education pre-service and in-service programmes for teachers, headteachers and teacher assistants operating across undergraduate, postgraduate and Masters levels with a particular interest in the development of standards-based models of assessment, school partnership and mentoring. In 1998/9 she led the UK side of a major collaborative project with CSU to develop a Supported Open Learning teacher credentialing programme in California.

Presentation Description

This session describes the contribution of the Open University's Postgraduate Certificate in Education - a postgraduate pre-service teacher training programme - to teacher education in the UK and internationally. The programme was designed to provide access and opportunity to enter the teaching profession for those who could not train by conventional routes. This Supported Open Learning and school-university partnership model has proved successful in recruiting trainee teachers in the context of a UK teacher recruitment crisis, widening access to the profession for under-represented groups and promoting the professional dimension in teacher assessment. This teacher education model, its systems, structures and underlying principles, has been the basis of a number of successful international collaborations, including the US, where there are common issues of teacher quality, teacher recruitment and school improvement.

Institutional Mission and Content

The Open University has been widely hailed as the most important innovation in higher education in the UK of the last quarter-century. Since its foundation in 1969, it has become the largest university in the UK, teaching over 200,000 people every year. It is ranked in the top 15 of all UK universities.

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Teaching is by means Supported Open Learning via specially-produced textbooks and assessment materials, broadcasts on national TV and radio, audio-visual components, computer technology, home experiment kits and other media. Personal tuition is provided through a network of local study centres, and many courses also have short residential schools. Courses are prepared by teams of academic staff, educational technologists, BBC producers, editors and designers, and external consultants. OU courses are intended mainly for adults studying part-time in their own homes or places of work.

The Open University's mission is:

- open as to people
- open as to places
- open as to methods
- open as to ideas

The School of Education presents a wide range of courses leading to undergraduate (BA and BSc) and postgraduate awards (Advanced Diploma, Certificate in Professional Development, MA in Education and Doctorate in Education). Since 1994, the School has presented a range of Professional Qualifications including the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), and Specialist Teacher Assistant Certificate (STAC). In 1999 it becomes the largest provider of teacher in-service training in Information and Communications Technologies.
In broad terms, the School of Education:

- offers the widest range of subjects, academic level, and qualifications for the education profession within the UK;
- has given study opportunities to over 100,000 teachers since 1971;
- currently has over 14,000 student registrations annually;
- provides opportunities for teachers to train and update wherever they may work and reside;
- has the largest UK Masters in Education programme;
- is one of the largest UK initial teacher training providers through the PGCE;
- has a high research rating